

8. Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

■ Food and Nutrition Service

Nutrition is one of USDA's central missions. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers USDA's domestic nutrition assistance programs, with the mission of reducing hunger and food insecurity by providing children and needy families better access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education.

USDA has elevated nutrition and nutrition education to top priorities in all its programs. Rather than simply providing food, FNS also works to empower program participants with knowledge of the link between diet and health.

At the same time, USDA is committed to ensuring that the programs operate accurately and efficiently. FNS works closely with the States to ensure that benefits are received only by those who are eligible, and to catch and punish people who seek to abuse the programs for their own gain.

FNS works in partnership with the States in all its programs. States determine most administrative details regarding participant eligibility and distribution of nutrition benefits, and FNS provides funding to cover some of the States' administrative costs.

For FY 2000, the total appropriation for the nutrition assistance programs is \$35 billion, nearly two-thirds of the entire USDA budget.

Overall, the nutrition programs reach one out of every six people living in America, and touch every community in the United States. Most of the programs are directed at low-income people or school children. They include:

- The Food Stamp Program
- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- The National School Lunch Program
- The School Breakfast Program
- Team Nutrition
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program
- The Child and Adult Care Food Program
- The Commodity Supplemental Food Program
- The Summer Food Service Program
- The Special Milk Program
- The Nutrition Program for the Elderly
- The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
- The WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program
- The Nutrition Assistance Program in Puerto Rico and the Pacific Islands

FNS is also the primary Federal agency that delivers food assistance in response to domestic natural disasters and other crises. The Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services mission area also includes the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion.

Additional information on FNS and its programs can be found on the World Wide Web at www.fns.usda.gov.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

Determining eligibility: Many of USDA's nutrition programs use household income as a guideline for program eligibility. Depending on the program rules, household income of 100 percent, 130 percent, or 185 percent of the Federal poverty level may be used to determine levels of eligibility. As of June 30, 1999, 100 percent of the poverty guideline is \$16,700 a year for a family of four; 130 percent is \$21,710 a year; and 185 percent is \$30,895 a year. Federal poverty guidelines are established by the Office of Management and Budget and are updated annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

FNS was established August 8, 1969, and celebrated its 30th anniversary in 1999. But many of the nutrition programs had their origins at USDA long before FNS existed as a separate agency. The predecessor of the modern Food Stamp Program was the Food Stamp Plan, which originated in 1939. The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations evolved from the Needy Family Program, which helped hungry Americans during the Depression era. USDA also distributed surplus food for use in school meals during the 1930's.

The Food Stamp Program

The Food Stamp Program is the cornerstone of USDA's nutrition assistance programs. The program helps low-income households increase their food purchasing power and their choices for a better diet. It is the primary source of nutrition assistance for low-income households in the United States. Initiated as a pilot program in 1961 and made permanent in 1964, the program issues monthly allotments of coupons that are redeemable at retail food stores, or provides benefits through Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT).

The Food Stamp Program serves the most needy among the Nation's population. In Fiscal Year 1997, more than half of all food stamp participants were children; more than 90 percent of all food stamp households had incomes below the Federal poverty level; and 39 percent had incomes that were half or less of the poverty level.

Marked decline in food stamp participation in recent years has led to a concern that some people who are eligible for benefits may not realize they are eligible, especially working poor households who may have lost benefits under other programs. FNS launched its food stamp information initiative in 1999 to ensure that all eligible people know they are eligible and know how to get benefits.

Increasingly, paper food stamp coupons are being replaced by electronic benefit transfer, or EBT, a computerized system in which participants use magnetic strip cards to access their food stamp accounts at the point of sale. As of October 1999, 40 States and the District of Columbia were operating the EBT system for all or part of their food stamp issuance, and some were using it for other benefits programs as well. All other States were in some stage of EBT development.

The 1996 welfare reform law requires all States to implement EBT systems for food stamp issuance by 2002. Because it eliminates paper coupons and creates an electronic record of every food stamp transaction, EBT is a useful tool in improving program delivery and in reducing certain types of food stamp fraud and trafficking.

EBT is only one component of FNS' commitment to Food Stamp Program integrity. The agency works closely with the States to ensure that they issue benefits in the correct amounts, and only to people who are eligible. EBT has enhanced FNS' ability to catch those who abuse the program, and penalties have been increased for people who are caught. In addition, FNS now has broader authority to review the performance of food retailers who participate in the program, and to quickly remove those who fail to follow program rules.

USDA also provides educational materials to help States integrate nutrition into the Food Stamp Program and to help food stamp recipients make healthier food choices as they use their benefits.

Eligibility: Food stamp eligibility and allotments are based on household size and income, assets, and other factors. A household's gross monthly income cannot exceed 130 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines, and its net income cannot exceed 100 percent of the guidelines (though households with elderly or disabled members are not subject to the gross income limit). Illegal aliens are not eligible to receive food stamp benefits. The welfare reform law of 1996 excluded many legal aliens from eligibility as well, though Congress later modified those provisions and restored benefits to many who were excluded under the 1996 law. The welfare reform law also limited able-bodied adults without dependents who are working or in job training to 3 months of benefits in a 36-month period.

Benefits: The level of benefits a household receives is based on its household income. Average monthly benefits were about \$72 per person in 1999. Households with no countable net income receive the maximum monthly allotment of food stamps—\$419 for a household of four in FY 1999. The allotment is based on the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan, a low-cost model food plan. The Food Stamp Program served an average of 18.2 million people each month in FY 1999.

Funding: The total Food Stamp Program appropriation was \$21.1 billion in FY 1999.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

How EBT works: Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) is a computerized system that allows food stamp customers to use a plastic debit card similar to a bank card to access their food stamp benefits. Eligible recipients have an account established for their monthly benefits. At the grocery checkout, they present the card, which is used to debit their food stamp account for the amount of eligible purchases. The funds are automatically transferred to the retailer's account, and an electronic record is made of the transaction. No money and no food stamps change hands.

The National School Lunch Program

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in more than 96,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches and afterschool snacks to more than 27 million children each school day.

The NSLP is usually administered by State education agencies, which operate the program through agreements with local school districts. FNS administers the program at the Federal level. School districts and independent schools that choose to take part in the lunch program receive cash reimbursement and donated commodity foods from USDA for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve meals that meet Federal nutrition requirements, and they must offer free and reduced-price lunches to eligible children. School food authorities can also be reimbursed for snacks served to children through age 18 in after-school educational or enrichment programs.

FNS's Team Nutrition initiative, launched in 1994, was the first major reform of the school lunch program since it was established in 1946. Team Nutrition updated nutrition standards so that all school meals will meet the recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Team Nutrition also provides training and technical support for school nutrition and food service staffs, and nutrition education materials for children and families.

USDA has placed special emphasis on improving the quality of commodity foods donated to the National School Lunch Program. The Commodities Improvement Council promotes the health of school children by improving the nutritional profile of USDA commodities while maintaining USDA's support for domestic agricultural markets. Based on the council's recommendations, USDA has reduced the fat, sodium, and sugar content of commodities, and increased the variety of low-fat and reduced-fat products.

USDA has greatly increased the amount of fresh produce available to schools and is now offering unprecedented amounts and varieties of fresh fruit and vegetables. A cooperative project with the Department of Defense (DOD) has allowed USDA to increase the variety of produce available to schools by utilizing DOD's buying and distribution system. USDA is also exploring ways to connect schools to

small-resource farmers in their areas, to help them purchase fresh, local produce directly from the producers.

Eligibility: Any child, regardless of family income level, can purchase a meal through the NSLP. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the Federal poverty level are eligible to receive free meals. Children from families with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of poverty are eligible for reduced-price meals. Children from families with incomes over 185 percent of poverty pay the full price, which is established by the local school food authority.

Benefits: Children receive meals free or at low cost because of USDA support for the school meals programs. Most of that support comes in the form of cash reimbursements to schools for meals served. USDA's per-meal reimbursement rates for the contiguous United States for school year 1999-2000 were \$1.98 for free meals; \$1.58 for reduced-price meals; and 19 cents for full-price meals. Reimbursement rates are slightly higher in Alaska and Hawaii. Schools may charge no more than 40 cents for a reduced-price meal. They set their own prices for full-price meals, though they must operate their meal services on a non-profit basis.

In addition to cash reimbursements, schools are entitled to receive commodity foods, called "entitlement" foods, at an annually adjusted per-meal rate (14.75 cents per meal in school year 1999-2000) for each meal they serve. Schools can receive additional commodities, known as "bonus" commodities, when these are available from surplus stocks purchased by USDA under surplus removal and price support programs. USDA commodities make up approximately 17 percent of the cost of the food served by the average school food authority. The rest of the food served is purchased locally by the school food authority.

Funding: For FY 2000, Congress appropriated \$5.7 billion for the National School Lunch Program.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

The value of USDA commodity foods makes up only about 17 percent of cost of the foods that are served to children in the National School Lunch Program. Nonetheless, USDA provided more than 1 billion pounds of food, valued at more than \$700 million, to schools in school year/fiscal year 1998-99.

The School Breakfast Program

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) provides cash assistance to States to operate nonprofit breakfast programs in schools and residential child care institutions. The program operates in more than 71,000 schools and institutions, serving a daily average of some 7.5 million children. It is administered at the Federal level by FNS. State education agencies administer the SBP at the State level, and local school food authorities operate it in schools.

Eligibility: Any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through SBP. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the Federal poverty level are eligible for free breakfasts. Children from families with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price breakfasts. Children from families with incomes over 185 percent of poverty pay the full, locally established price for their breakfasts.

Benefits: Students receive their meals free or at low cost because USDA supports the School Breakfast Program with cash reimbursements for meals served. For school year 1999-2000, schools in the contiguous United States received reimbursements of \$1.09 for a free meal; 79 cents for a reduced-price meal; and 21 cents for a full-price meal. As with the school lunch program, reimbursements are slightly higher in Alaska and Hawaii. Schools may charge no more than 30 cents for a reduced-price breakfast. Local schools set their own prices for full-price meals, but must operate on a non-profit basis.

Funding: For FY 2000, Congress appropriated \$1.4 billion for the SBP.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

The vast majority of children who participate in the School Breakfast Program—about 85 percent—receive their meals free or at a reduced price. That compares to 57 percent of children who receive free or reduced-price meals in the National School Lunch Program. However, FNS promotes the benefits of healthy breakfast for all children, regardless of income status. Teachers have long reported that their students are more alert and perform better in class if they eat breakfast. FNS will initiate a series of pilot projects in school year 2000-2001 to evaluate the link between free breakfast for all children and improvement in academic performance.

Team Nutrition

FNS provides nutrition education through Team Nutrition. Team Nutrition provides schools with nutrition education materials and other support for children's nutrition programs such as the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, and with technical support for food service professional staffs. It also provides nutrition education materials for USDA's other nutrition assistance programs.

Eligibility: All children participating in or eligible to participate in the USDA Child Nutrition Programs may receive nutrition education through Team Nutrition. Professional school food service staffs can also receive training and technical support.

Funding: In FY 2000, Congress appropriated \$10 million for Team Nutrition.

The WIC Program

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a grant program for States, intended to improve the health of pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, and infants and children up to 5 years old, by providing supplemental foods, nutrition education, and access to health care. A few State agencies provide food directly to participants, but most States provide WIC vouchers that can be used at authorized food stores for approved foods.

WIC provides each State with a grant of funds to serve its most needy eligible population. Because of documented successes of the WIC program in improving the nutritional well-being of participants, it has received continuing political support, enabling it to expand to serve more eligible people. In FY 1999, WIC served an average of more than 7.3 million people each month.

Eligibility: To be eligible for WIC, an applicant must be a pregnant, breastfeeding, or postpartum woman, or an infant or child under age 5, and must meet State residency requirements, meet an income standard, and be determined by a health professional to be at nutritional risk. This nutrition evaluation is done at no cost to the applicant.

Benefits: In most States, WIC participants receive vouchers that allow them to purchase a monthly food package especially designed to supplement their diets. The foods provided are high in protein, calcium, iron, and vitamins A and C. WIC foods include iron-fortified infant formula and infant cereal; iron-fortified adult cereal; vitamin C-rich fruit or vegetable juice; eggs, milk, and cheese; and legumes such as peanut butter, dried beans, or peas. Special therapeutic formulas and foods are provided when prescribed by a physician for a specified medical condition.

The Food and Nutrition Service also encourages WIC mothers to breastfeed their babies whenever possible. Women who breastfeed their babies and do not receive infant formula for them receive an enhanced WIC food package that includes tuna, carrots, and extra juice, cheese, and legumes.

Funding: The appropriation for the WIC program in FY 2000 is \$4 billion.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

In 1999, WIC was recognized for excellence in customer service by Vice President Gore's National Partnership for Reinventing Government. Among 30 high-impact Government programs, WIC's customer satisfaction rating was second only to the Head Start program. The American Customer Satisfaction Index is utilized to rate businesses. WIC's score compared favorably with businesses known for customer services, Nordstroms and Mercedes Benz.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

WIC celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1999. The first WIC site was opened in Pineville, KY, on January 15, 1974, as part of a 2-year pilot project. In 1975, the WIC program was established by public law as a permanent national health and nutrition program.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

WIC has been shown to be effective in improving the health of new-borns and infants, as well as mothers. A 1990 USDA study of WIC and Medicaid costs in five States reported that every \$1 spent on WIC prenatal care saved up to \$3.13 in Medicaid costs in the first 60 days after birth.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

FNS requires all States to take bids from or negotiate with manufacturers for the best rebate on each can of WIC infant formula purchased. For FY 1999, infant formula rebates totaled about \$1.4 billion nationwide.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

USDA estimates that WIC serves 46 percent of babies born in the United States.

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) was established in 1992. The program has two goals: To provide fresh, nutritious, unprepared food, such as fruits and vegetables, from farmers' markets to WIC participants who are at nutritional risk; and to expand consumers' awareness and use of farmers' markets. This program, operated in conjunction with the regular WIC Program, is offered in 33 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, and four Indian tribal organizations.

Eligibility: Women, infants over 4 months old, and children who receive WIC program benefits, or who are WIC-eligible, may purchase foods at farmers' markets through the FMNP.

Benefits: Fresh produce can be purchased with FMNP coupons. State agencies may limit FMNP sales to specific foods that are locally grown to encourage participants to support the farmers in their own State.

Funding: Congress made up to \$15 million available for FMNP under the FY 2000 WIC appropriation.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

Studies have shown that where the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program has been available, WIC participants have consumed more fresh fruits and vegetables.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is a program of grants to States, administered by FNS at the Federal level. CSFP provides commodity foods to supplement the diets of low-income infants; children up to the age of 6; pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women; and persons 60 years of age and older.

CSFP operates in 22 States, the District of Columbia, and two Indian tribal organizations. USDA donates commodity foods to the State agencies for distribution, and provides funds to State and local agencies to cover certain administrative costs. The program served an average of more than 381,000 people each month in FY 1999.

Eligibility: State agencies that administer CSFP may establish a residency requirement and/or require applicants to be determined to be at nutritional risk in order to be eligible for program participation. To be income eligible, women, infants, and children must be eligible for benefits under existing Federal, State, or local food, health, or welfare programs, and must not currently be receiving WIC benefits. Elderly persons must meet a low-income standard.

Benefits: There are six food packages for different categories of participants. The food packages are not intended to provide a complete and balanced diet, but rather are supplements that are good sources of the nutrients often lacking in participants' diets.

Funding: The 2000 appropriation for CSFP is \$88.3 million.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides healthy meals and snacks in child care centers, family day care homes, and adult day care facilities.

By reimbursing participating day care operators for a portion of the costs of eligible meals and snacks and providing them with USDA commodity food and nutrition information materials, CACFP helps ensure that children and adults in day care receive healthy meals. Family day care homes may be overseen by sponsoring organizations, which also receive reimbursements from USDA for their administrative expenses.

The program generally operates in child care centers, outside-school-hours care centers, family and group day care homes, and some adult day care centers. Homeless shelters that serve young children may also be eligible to participate. In return for Federal support, care providers in the CACFP must serve meals that meet Federal guidelines, and must offer free or reduced-price meals to eligible people. Child care centers can also be reimbursed for snacks served to children through age 18 in after-school educational or enrichment programs.

First authorized as part of a larger pilot project in 1968, the program was formerly known as the Child Care Food Program. It was made a permanent program in 1978, and the name was changed in 1989 to reflect the addition of an adult component. CACFP is administered at the Federal level by FNS. State agencies or FNS regional offices oversee the program at the local level.

In September 1999, CACFP provided meals to some 2.4 million children and more than 64,000 adults.

Eligibility: At child and adult day care centers, participants from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the Federal poverty level may qualify for free meals; those from families with income between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level may qualify for reduced-price meals; and those from families with income above 185 percent of the poverty level pay full price. For family day care homes, Congress instituted a two-tier system of reimbursements under the welfare reform law of 1996. Under this system, day care providers located in low-income areas, or whose own households are low income, are reimbursed at a single rate (tier 1 reimbursement) for meals served to enrolled children. Other providers are reimbursed at a lower rate (tier 2 reimbursement) unless they choose to have their sponsoring organizations identify children who are income eligible. Meals served to such income-eligible children are reimbursed at the higher tier 1 level.

Benefits: Children and adults who attend day care facilities receive nutritious meals and snacks. Care providers receive reimbursement for eligible meals and snacks. Family day care sponsoring organizations may receive reimbursement for their administrative costs.

Funding: Congress appropriated \$1.7 billion for the CACFP in FY 1999.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

Congress in 1998 expanded reimbursement to provide snacks for educational and enrichment afterschool care programs for at-risk children through age 18. Funding for snacks in afterschool programs is provided through the National School Lunch Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

More than 170,000 family day care homes and 34,000 day care centers participated in the Child and Adult Care Food Program in Fiscal Year 1999.

The Summer Food Service Program

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides free meals to low-income children during school vacations.

SFSP was first created as part of a larger pilot program in 1968, and became a separate program in 1975. The SFSP served almost 2.3 million children a day during the summer of 1998.

The program is administered at the Federal level by FNS. Locally, it is operated by approved sponsors, which receive reimbursement from USDA for the meals they serve.

Sponsors provide meals at a central site such as a school or community center. All meals are served free.

The Summer Food Service Program operates in low-income areas where half or more of the children are from households with income at or below 185 percent of the Federal poverty guideline. Sites that primarily serve homeless children may participate regardless of location. Residential children's camps also may get reimbursement through the SFSP for meals served to income-eligible children.

Eligibility: Children age 18 and under, and people over age 18 who are determined by a State educational agency to be mentally or physically handicapped, and who participate in a school program for the mentally or physically handicapped, may receive meals through the Summer Food Service Program.

Benefits: At most sites, participants receive either one or two meals a day. Residential camps and sites that primarily serve children from migrant households may be approved to serve up to three meals per day.

Sponsors are reimbursed for documented operating and administrative costs.

Funding: Congress appropriated \$298 million for the Summer Food Service Program in FY 1999.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

Some 27 million children eat school lunch every day when school is in session, and more than half of them receive their meals free or at a reduced price. The Summer Food Service Program offers those needy children nutritious food when school is not in session. However, only about 2.3 million children currently participate in the SFSP, in part because many communities do not sponsor the program.

The Special Milk Program

The Special Milk Program (SMP) provides milk to children in schools and child care institutions that do not participate in other Federal meal service programs. The program reimburses schools for the milk they serve.

Schools in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs may also participate in the SMP to provide milk to children in half-day prekindergarten and kindergarten programs where children do not have access to the school meal programs.

Expansion of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, which include milk, has led to a substantial reduction in the SMP since its peak in the late 1960's.

Eligibility: Any child at a participating school or kindergarten program can get milk through the SMP. Children may buy milk or receive it free, depending on the school's choice of program options. When local officials offer free milk under the program, any child from a family that meets income guidelines for free meals and milk is eligible.

Benefits: Participating schools and institutions receive reimbursement from the Federal Government for each half-pint of milk served. They must operate their milk programs on a nonprofit basis. They agree to use the Federal reimbursement to reduce the selling price of milk to all children.

Funding: Congress appropriated \$17.2 million for the program in FY 2000.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

In 1999, more than 128 million half-pints of milk were served through the Special Milk Program.

Nutrition Program for the Elderly

The Nutrition Program for the Elderly (NPE) helps provide elderly persons with nutritionally sound meals through meals-on-wheels programs or in senior citizen centers and similar settings.

The NPE is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, but receives commodity foods and financial support from USDA under provisions of the Older Americans Act of 1965. USDA provided reimbursement for more than 20 million meals a month in FY 1998.

Eligibility: Age is the only factor used in determining eligibility. People age 60 or older and their spouses, regardless of age, are eligible for NPE benefits. There is no income requirement to receive meals under NPE.

Benefits: Each recipient can contribute as much as he or she wishes toward the cost of the meal, but meals are free to those who cannot make any contribution.

Under NPE, USDA provides cash reimbursements and/or commodity foods to organizations that provide meals through DHHS programs. Meals served must meet a specified percentage of the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA's) in order to qualify for cash or commodity assistance.

Funding: Congress appropriated \$140 million for NPE for 2000.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

Indian tribal organizations may select an age below 60 for defining an "older" person for their tribes for purposes of eligibility for the Nutrition Program for the Elderly.

The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

This program provides monthly food packages to low-income families living on reservations, and to Native American families living near reservations. Many Native Americans participate in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) as an alternative to the Food Stamp Program if they do not have easy access to food stores. An average of 129,000 people received food through each month in 1999.

The program is administered at the Federal level by FNS in cooperation with State and tribal agencies. USDA provides food to the agencies, which are responsible for program operations such as storage and distribution, eligibility certification, and nutrition education.

The food packages distributed through FDPIR were updated in 1997 in a cooperative effort by USDA nutritionists, tribal leaders, and health advocates. Changes have made the food packages easier to use, and better serve the health needs and preferences of Native Americans. USDA also provides nutrition information in the monthly food package, with suggestions for making the most nutritious use of the commodity foods.

Eligibility: To participate in FDPIR, the household must have low income within program requirements, have assets within specified limits, and be located on or near an Indian reservation.

Benefits: USDA donates a variety of foods to help FDPIR participants maintain a balanced diet. These commodities include canned meats and fish products; vegetables, fruits, and juices; dried beans; peanuts or peanut butter; milk, butter, and cheese; pasta, flour, or grains; adult cereals; corn syrup or honey; and vegetable oil and shortening. Frozen chicken and ground beef are increasingly available as tribes are able to store and handle these products safely, and the 1997 review of food packages resulted in the addition of noodles, spaghetti sauce, crackers, reduced-salt soups and low-fat refried beans.

Through an interagency partnership with the Department of Defense and AMS, fresh fruits and vegetables are now available to Indian tribal organizations within the FDPIR.

Each participant receives a monthly package that contains a variety of foods. For FY 1999, the value of the monthly food package was about \$31 per person.

Funding: Congress appropriated \$75 million for FDPIR in FY 1999.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

A recipe book, Quick & Easy Commodity Recipes for the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, was released for use by FDPIR participants in 1990. The book was developed as part of a 5-year nutrition education plan. USDA also distributes a series of nutrition and health fact sheets for FDPIR participants.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) provides emergency food assistance to needy Americans through the distribution of USDA commodities. Under TEFAP, commodities are made available to States for distribution to organizations that provide them to low-income households for home consumption, and to organizations that use them in congregate meal service for the needy, including the homeless. Local agencies, usually food banks, shelters, and soup kitchens, are designated by the States to distribute the food.

TEFAP was first authorized in 1981 to distribute surplus commodities to households. Its aim was to help reduce Federal food inventories and storage costs while assisting the needy. The 1988 Hunger Prevention Act required the Secretary of Agriculture not only to distribute surplus foods, but also to purchase additional food for further distribution to needy households. Foods available vary depending on market conditions.

Eligibility: Each State sets its own income limits for household eligibility to receive food for home use. States can adjust the income criteria based on the level of need in order to ensure that assistance is provided only to those most in need.

No income test is applied to people who receive meals at soup kitchens and other congregate feeding sites that make use of TEFAP foods.

Benefits: TEFAP has provided many billions of pounds of food since its beginning. More than 1 billion pounds, valued at \$846 million, were distributed at the program's height in 1987. In 1999, more than 361 million pounds of food, valued at more than \$225 million, was distributed.

Funding: Congress appropriated \$143 million for TEFAP in FY 2000.

The Nutrition Assistance Programs in Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

The Food Stamp Program in Puerto Rico was replaced in 1982 by a block grant program. American Samoa and the Northern Marianas in the Pacific also provide benefits under block grants. **Eligibility:** The territories determine eligibility and allotments for their programs based on household size, income, assets, and other factors.

Benefits: The territories provide cash and coupons to participants rather than food stamps or food distribution. The grant can also be used for administrative expenses or for special projects related to food production and distribution.

Funding: The appropriation for the NAP in Puerto Rico for FY 2000 was \$1.3 billion. For the Pacific Islands, the appropriation was \$10 million.

USDA Disaster Assistance

FNS is the primary agency responsible for providing Federal food assistance in response to domestic disasters such as fires, floods, storms, and earthquakes. FNS provides assistance through the Food Distribution Program and the Disaster Food Stamp Program.

Food Distribution Program

FNS can provide USDA-donated food assistance through State food distribution agencies. All States have stocks of USDA food on hand for use in their commodity programs for schools or needy people. These stocks can be released immediately for use in a disaster situation.

Upon request from a State, FNS will procure additional food to meet the needs of people affected by a disaster. Nearby States may be asked to release their stocks of USDA food to help feed disaster victims. State agencies then distribute the food to emergency shelters and other mass feeding sites operated by disaster relief agencies such as the American Red Cross.

The State may also request that food be made available for household distribution, if commercial channels of food supply are not available because of the disaster.

Disaster Food Stamp Program

When commercial channels of food supply have been restored following a disaster, a State may request approval from the Secretary of Agriculture to operate a Disaster Food Stamp Program. A Disaster Food Stamp Program may also be implemented following a Presidential disaster declaration under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

If approval is granted, FNS provides on-site guidance for establishing and operating the disaster program. FNS ensures that an adequate supply of food stamp coupons or EBT benefits are available. State and local officials are responsible for determining the eligibility of households to receive disaster food stamps, and for issuing the benefits.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

In fiscal year 1999, FNS provided approximately \$13.2 million pounds of food to victims of natural disasters.

■ Communications and Governmental Affairs

In 1999, the Office of Consumer Affairs merged with Public and Governmental Affairs to provide more coordinated support to FNS, consumer groups, and FNS program stakeholders. Communications and Governmental Affairs (CGA) advises the Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services on consumer and constituent issues and concerns, as well as governmental and public affairs.

CGA arranges periodic meetings, briefings, and roundtables on USDA and FNS policy for the public, consumer representatives, and program stakeholders. It provides public access to a wide range of USDA and FNS documents such as speeches, regulatory proposals, and studies, through the Internet and other electronic media, and it responds to consumer requests for assistance and information on USDA policy and procedures.

■ **Nutrition Program Fact:**

How To Apply: People who want to apply for any of the nutrition assistance programs that FNS operates must do so through the appropriate State or local agency. In general, applicants for the largest programs should contact the following:

- *Food Stamp Program: Contact the State welfare agency. Food stamp offices may be listed in the telephone book under "food stamps," "social services," "human services," or some similar term.*
- *National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program free and reduced-price meals: Contact the neighborhood school or local school district.*

■ *WIC program: Contact State or local public health offices. For programs not listed above, State and local welfare agencies, health departments, or education agencies can provide information about what programs are available and how and where to apply. Local Congressional representatives' offices may also be able to provide assistance in contacting the appropriate agency.*

The CGA director reports to the Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services, and receives managerial and administrative support from FNS.

■ Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion was established in December 1994 to provide direction and coordination for USDA's nutrition research and policy activities. The Center's mission is to enhance the nutritional status of Americans by linking scientific research to the nutritional needs of the American consumer. Nutrition research is translated into information and materials for nutrition educators and policy makers, health professionals, private companies, and consumers to increase public knowledge and understanding of the importance of nutrition and how to improve diet quality.

The Center is best known for the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, *The Food Guide Pyramid*, *The Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children*, *The Healthy Eating Index*, and *Expenditures on Children by Families*. These and other products developed by the Center are available at the Center's web site at www.usda.gov/cnpp.

The Center is an independent resource in USDA which reports to the Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services and works cooperatively with other parts of the Department to provide strategic planning and coordination for education and nutrition policy. The Center receives administrative support from FNS. Its funding for FY 1999 is \$2.5 million.

The Food Guide Pyramid

Fats, Oils, & Sweets
USE SPARINGLY

KEY

◻ Fat (naturally occurring and added)

◼ Sugars (added)

These symbols show fat and added sugars in foods.

Milk, Yogurt, & Cheese Group
2-3 SERVINGS

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, & Nuts Group
2-3 SERVINGS

Vegetable Group
3-5 SERVINGS

Fruit Group
2-4 SERVINGS

Bread, Cereal, Rice, & Pasta Group
6-11 SERVINGS

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture/U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

WHAT COUNTS AS A SERVING?

Food Groups

Bread, Cereal, Rice, and Pasta

1 slice of bread

1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal

1/2 cup of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta

Vegetable

1 cup of raw leafy vegetables

1/2 cup of other vegetables, cooked or chopped raw

3/4 cup of vegetable juice

Fruit

1 medium apple, banana, orange

1/2 cup of chopped, cooked, or canned fruit

3/4 cup of fruit juice

Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese

1 cup of milk or yogurt

1-1/2 ounces of natural cheese

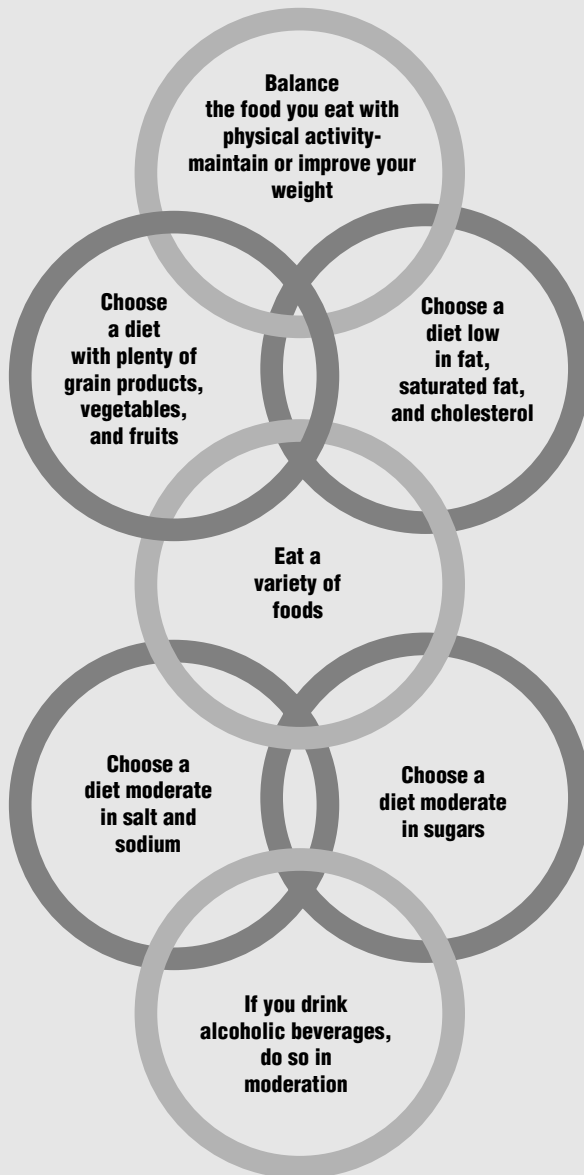
2 ounces of process cheese

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts

2-3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish

1/2 cup of cooked dry beans or 1 egg counts as 1 ounce of lean meat.
2 tablespoons of peanut butter or 1/3 cup of nuts count as 1 ounce of meat.

Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans



U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

For More Information:

Food and Nutrition Service Director, Office of Communications and Governmental Affairs

Joyce Willis
3101 Park Center Dr., #805PC
Alexandria, VA 22302
703-305-2281
FAX 703-305-2312
joyce.willis@fns.usda.gov

Deputy Director, Office of Communications and Governmental Affairs

Mike Haga
3101 Park Center Dr., #926PC
Alexandria, VA 22302
703-305-2039
mike.haga@fns.usda.gov

Director, Governmental Affairs

Frank Ippolito
3101 Park Center Dr., #806PC
Alexandria, VA 22302
703-305-2010
FAX 703-305-2464
frank.ippolito@fns.usda.gov

Director, Public Information

Jean Daniel
3101 Park Center Dr., #819PC
Alexandria, VA 22302
703-305-2286
FAX 703-305-1117
jean.daniel@fns.usda.gov

Team Leader, Publishing/AV Branch

Chris Kocsis
3101 Park Center Dr., #814PC
Alexandria, VA 22302
703-305-2286
FAX 703-305-1117
chris.kocsis@fns.usda.gov

Team Leader, News Branch

3101 Park Center Dr., #815PC
Alexandria, VA 22302
703-305-2286
FAX 703-305-1117

Freedom of Info Act Officer

Sara Bradshaw
3101 Park Center Dr., #308PC
Alexandria, VA 22302
703-305-2244
FAX 703-305-2921
sara.bradshaw@fns.usda.gov

FNS Regional Public Information Offices

Northeast Reg. PA Director

Charles De Julius
10 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 02222-1068
617-565-6395
FAX 617-565-6472
charles.dejulius@fns.usda.gov

Mid-Atlantic Reg. PA Director

Margarita Maisterrena
Mercer Corp. Park, 300 Corporate Blvd
Robbinsville, NJ 08691-1598
609-259-5091
FAX 609-259-5147
margarita.maisterrena.@fns.usda.gov

Southeast Reg. Public Affairs

Karen Dean
61 Forsyth St., SW, Suite 112
Atlanta, GA 30303
404-562-1812
FAX 404-527-4502
karen.dean@fns.usda.gov

Midwest Reg. PA Director

Lawrence Rudmann
77 W. Jackson Blvd., 20th Flr
Chicago, IL 60604
312-353-1044
FAX 312-353-0171
lawrence.rudmann@fns.usda.gov

Mtn. Plains Reg. PA Director

Craig Forman
1244 Speer Boulevard, Rm903
Denver, CO 80204
303-844-0312
FAX 303-844-6203
craig.forman@fns.usda.gov

Southwest Reg. PA Director

Judy Barron
1100 Commerce Street, Rm5C30
Dallas, TX 75242
214-290-9802
FAX 214-767-6249
judy.barron@fns.usda.gov

Western Reg. PA Director

Cordelia Morris
550 Kearny Street, Rm 400
San Francisco, CA 94108
415-705-1311
FAX 415-705-1364
cordelia.morris@fns.usda.gov

**Center for Nutrition Policy
and Promotion****Information Director**

John Webster
Suite 200 North Lobby,
1120 20th St., NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-418-2312
FAX 202-208-2322
john.webster@usda.gov